



National Transportation Safety Board

## The Chairman's Corner

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Friday, July 25, 2008

### NTSB Commends DOT and FAA on Major Aviation Safety Advancement



**Chairman Rosenker delivering remarks during the press conference**

During a joint press conference at the NTSB Training Center on July 16, Chairman Mark V. Rosenker commended the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Aviation Administration for its final rule on fuel tank inerting. This rule is a result of a Safety Board recommendation aimed at eliminating fuel tank explosions in transport category aircraft. This recommendation has been on the Board's Most Wanted List of Transportation Safety Improvements since 2002.

"The NTSB congratulates the DOT and the FAA on this important safety achievement," said Chairman Rosenker. "From tragedy we draw knowledge to improve safety and today's announcement represents a significant step toward avoiding future aviation accidents of this nature."

On July 17, 1996, TWA flight 800, a 747 en route from New York to Paris, exploded shortly after taking off from JFK Airport; 230 people lost their lives. In its final report, the Safety Board determined that the probable cause of the TWA 800 crash was an explosion of the center wing fuel tank, resulting from ignition of the flammable fuel/air mixture in the tank.

The Safety Board called upon the FAA to require design or operational changes that will preclude the operation of large airplanes with explosive fuel-air mixtures in the fuel tank. In particular, the Board recommended that the FAA give significant consideration to the development of airplane design modifications, such as nitrogen-inerting systems, and to apply such modifications to newly certificated airplanes and, where feasible, to existing airplanes.

The rule issued by the DOT was in response to the Safety Board's recommendation A-96-174.



**Chairman Rosenker with DOT Secretary Mary Peters and FAA Acting Administrator Bobby Sturgell, alongside family member Matt Ziemkiewicz view the re-construction of TWA 800**

### NTSB Finds that Poor Decision Making Led to Grounding of Cruise Ship

In a Board Meeting on July 22, The NTSB has determined that the probable cause of the grounding of the Empress of the North was the failure of the officer of the watch and the helmsman to navigate the turn at Rocky Island, which resulted from the master's decision to assign an inexperienced, newly licensed junior third mate to the bridge watch from midnight to 4:00 a.m. The third mate was not familiar with the route, the vessel's handling characteristics, or the equipment on the vessel's bridge.

On May 14, 2007, the 300-foot passenger vessel Empress of the North, operated by Majestic America Line, grounded on a charted rock at the intersection of Lynn Canal and Icy Strait in southeastern Alaska, about 20 miles southwest of Juneau. The vessel was negotiating a turn west out of Lynn Canal into Icy Strait on its way to Glacier Bay, the next stop on a 7-day cruise, carrying 206 passengers and 75 crewmembers. The vessel struck the rock, known as Rocky Island, which was illuminated by a flashing green navigation light.

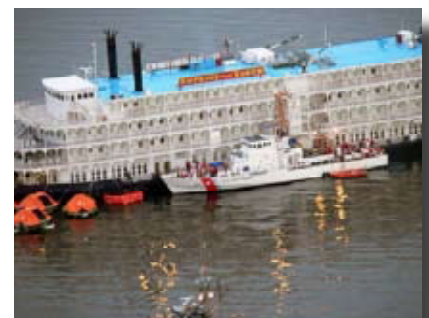
Passengers and crewmembers were evacuated safely without injuries. The vessel sustained damage to its starboard underside and propulsion system.

In the report adopted on Tuesday, the Board noted that because of the senior third mate's illness, the master replaced him with the new junior third mate for the midnight-to-4:00 a.m. watch. The third mate held an unlimited, any-ocean third officer's license but had never before stood watch on the vessel or traveled the waters of Lynn Canal.

The master had ample time to consider the watchkeeping assignment, the Board stated. However, the Safety Board investigators found no evidence that the master considered other options and did little to prepare the junior third mate for his first underway watch.

The third mate lacked any knowledge of the route and should not have been left to make this critical maneuver on his own, the Board said. The Safety Board concluded that the master jeopardized the vessel's safety by allowing the third mate to stand a bridge watch before he was familiar with the route and the bridge equipment.

As a result of its investigation of this accident, the Safety Board recommended that state and U. S. maritime academies use the circumstances of the accident to teach students about their responsibilities as newly licensed officers. The Safety Board also recommended that the Passenger Vessel Association inform its members about the circumstances of the accident.



## Chairman Rosenker Meets with Marine and Aviation Officials



**Chairman Rosenker with IMO Secretary-General, Efthimios Mitropoulos**

On a recent visit to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in London, Chairman Mark Rosenker met with Secretary-General Efthimios Mitropoulos. They discussed recent developments in maritime safety, including adoption of the new IMO "Code of the International Standards and Recommended Practices for a Safety Investigation into a Marine Casualty or Marine Incident" which will come into force as a part of the Safety of Life at Sea Convention on January 1, 2010.

After meeting with officials at the IMO, the Chairman visited Lloyd's Register of Shipping (LR) to discuss ship classification. Founded in 1760, LR is the world's oldest and largest marine classification society. Lloyd's Register employs over 5,000 persons around the world to assess and certify ships, systems and facilities to improve quality and increase safety. They work with ship owners, operators and builders to provide independent third party services related to the design, construction and operation of ships. They also carry out flag state statutory functions on behalf of many countries.

In addition, Chairman Rosenker, who was accompanied by Joe Osterman, Jack Spencer, and Tom Doyle, visited the Warsash Maritime Academy (WMA) in Southampton. WMA provides education, training, consultancy and research to the international shipping

and off-shore oil industries. The Academy is an integral part of Southampton Solent University; a relationship that sets it apart from most other maritime schools. Courses cover a wide range of maritime education and training from deck and engineer officer cadetships, including degree pathways, to senior officer certificates of competency, together with the associated safety training. The Academy is well known for its continuous professional development training, often using sophisticated simulation techniques pioneered at Warsash.

Following the Chairman's visit to various Marine agencies, he spent a day at the Farnborough Air Show, where he met with officials from Boeing, along with other aviation companies, as well as aviation officials from a number of countries.



**Chairman Rosenker, Joe Osterman, Jack Spencer, and Tom Doyle meet with officials at Lloyd's Register of Shipping**

## Vice Chairman Sumwalt Advocates Aviation Safety

On Thursday, July 17th, Vice Chairman Robert Sumwalt spoke to Polaris Aviation Solutions in Annapolis, Maryland, regarding safety culture. The vice chairman explained the elements of safety culture and emphasized the importance of the commitment to safety policies and procedures by everyone in a company from the top down. Polaris Aviation Solutions is a small general aviation company that oversees a fleet of managed aircraft. The company operates Eurocopter, Gulfstream, Falcon, and Boeing products and currently performs worldwide operations, specializing in the United Kingdom, France and Russia.

On Sunday, July 20, the Vice Chairman spoke to the FlightSafety International leadership conference in Orlando, Florida. In his remarks, he illustrated three main leadership qualities: being a servant leader, having integrity, and forming a vision for the future. He also discussed SOP adherence and professionalism, stating, "You never know on which flight your career will be judged."

## George Black Named Distinguished Member of Engineering Society



George W. Black Jr., P.E., Dist.M.ASCE, was recently named a Distinguished Member of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). Formerly known as honorary membership, distinguished membership is the Society's highest accolade and recognizes those who have achieved eminence in a branch of engineering. The active roster of distinguished members is composed of only 193 of the Society's more than 140,000 members worldwide. Black—who is being honored for his expertise and leadership in transportation engineering and public safety, as well as his service as the first practicing highway engineer to be appointed and confirmed as a Board Member of the NTSB—will be formally inducted on Thursday, November 6, 2008, at ASCE's Annual Civil Engineering Conference in Pittsburgh.